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Contact: Carla Harris
(804) 726-7107

Protecting the innocent is their mission

Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect presents awards to outstanding child advocates

Richmond, Va. — The Commonwealth recognizes April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, but for many, protecting children is their mission year round.

Governor Timothy M. Kaine, along with the Governor's Advisory Board (GAB) on Child Abuse and Neglect, today announced winners of this year's awards for outstanding champions for children. The GAB Awards recognize Virginians who have exhibited a strong commitment to advocacy, protection, prevention, treatment and assistance.

"It is a privilege to recognize the men and women who dedicate their lives to the safety and security of our children," said Governor Timothy Kaine. "Their focus on prevention is especially critical." Awards were presented at this year's Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month Conference in Richmond on April 7.

This year's winners are:

- **Ann Caulkins of Alexandria** was described in her nomination as "the ultimate child advocate." Working with Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) in Alexandria, she volunteers with the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program, the Family Drug Treatment Court and Volunteer Emergency Families for Children (VEFC). She has volunteered more than 500 hours with CASA and contributed to the health and safety of hundreds of children and families through her other volunteer work.
- **Jeanine Harper of Richmond** is the executive director of Greater Richmond SCAN. Since joining SCAN in 1999, she has focused on establishing and enhancing programs for children and families. The Family Support Program served fewer than 300 people in 1999 when Harper first arrived. Under her leadership, SCAN expects to serve close to 1,500 people this year. Due to her commitment, a Child Advocacy Center has been developed and Spanish language parenting programs initiated. She has been recognized by the National Association of Social Workers as a visionary child advocate.
- **Joyelle Saunders of Newport News** has had an immediate and profound impact in her first year as program coordinator of the Voices for Kids CASA Program of Southeast Virginia. The program has grown from two to eleven volunteers, and she is working on

expanding it to three neighboring jurisdictions. During her short tenure, Saunders has secured grants funding to provide “Things of My Own Bags” to children in foster care.

- **Debra Shelton of Chesapeake** is a computer technician by vocation and a child advocate by avocation. Her calling to do whatever she can to prevent children from experiencing the trauma of abuse and neglect is based on her own childhood experiences. For more than 10 years she has been a board member of Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads. She has shared her moving personal story as a trainer and advisor on the state and national level.
- **Rosemary “Posy” Walton of Newport News** has been a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer since 2004. She also devotes her time to the Newport News Family Drug Treatment Court, where she helps mothers and children reunite after successful substance abuse treatment. She is affectionately known as “Miss Posy” by the children with whom she works.

Two additional awards were presented. The Dr. Anthony Shaw Award for Exceptional Child Protective Services was established in 1992 and recognizes distinguished child protective services professionals for outstanding contributions to the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. This year’s award is presented posthumously to **Phyllis Moyer of Hanover**. Moyer devoted her career to developing programs and policies to benefit children and families, first at the state level working for the Virginia Department of Social Services and as deputy director of the former Virginia Department for Children. She later served as executive director of the National Association of Social Workers Virginia Chapter and as a field instructor for Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of Social Work. She worked closely with the Governor’s Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, including serving with Dr. Shaw. Her most recent work at Woodville Elementary School in the City of Richmond was her greatest love. There, she headed up the volunteer mentoring program as the site coordinator for Communities in Schools, Inc. She worked closely with the community until her death in 2007.

Theatre IV of Richmond received a special award for *Hugs and Kisses*, a child sexual abuse prevention play that was created in 1983. For 25 years, this award-winning musical has been teaching children in kindergarten through fifth grade about personal body safety. The program also provides children who have been abused the opportunity to speak with a social services professional. *Hugs and Kisses* is produced by Theatre IV in partnership with Prevent Child Abuse Virginia and the Virginia Department of Social Services and has been performed in every school district in Virginia and seen by more than 1.2 million children.

“These advocates do not dedicate their time and effort to win awards. They do it to improve the lives of Virginia’s children, which makes it especially satisfying to recognize them in this way,” said Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Commissioner Anthony Conyers Jr.

The awards and conference were sponsored by the Virginia Department of Social Services and Prevent Child Abuse Virginia and co-sponsored by the Governor’s Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, the Family and Children’s Trust Fund, the Child Abuse Prevention Committee and the Virginia Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention.

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Interviews and photos available upon request. For additional story ideas and for information on how your media outlet can help raise awareness of child abuse, neglect and prevention, please contact Carla Harris, VDSS, (804) 726-7107 or carla.harris@dss.virginia.gov.